



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

1 August 2017

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1170, "An Act To Reduce Youth Access to Tobacco Products."

This bill would change the legal age for purchase of tobacco products from 18- to 21-years-old. However, to avoid the true fiscal impact of the bill, it was amended to grandfather all who reach the age of 18 by July 1, 2018. This kind of legislative chicanery is not only irresponsible, but it will also contribute to a significant deficit in the next biennial budget.

The fiscally irresponsible aspect of the bill is reason enough to deserve my veto. But I am equally concerned about this attempt at "social engineering" by those who do not respect the rights and responsibilities our society vests in our citizens when they become 18. After World War II, President Eisenhower used his 1954 State of the Union Address to call for 18-year-olds to have the right to vote. Having commanded the troops in the war, he understood how unfair it was to those who had served our country and defended our liberties while being denied this fundamental right. In 1971, the 26th Amendment to the United States Constitution granted the full rights of citizenship to 18-year-olds.

In addition to the right to vote and serve in the military, our laws provide 18-year-olds the right to marry and divorce and make decisions about medical treatment. The responsibilities to pay taxes and be tried as adults if accused of a crime also come with turning 18. I cannot support legislation that denies the right to purchase a legal product to those who are otherwise treated as adults.

Those who advocate that this legislation would protect those under 18 from tobacco use ignore the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's surveys from 2011-2014, which provide evidence that four times as many high school students drink alcohol than smoke cigarettes. The fact that the legal age to purchase and consume alcohol is 21 everywhere in the country while the legal age to purchase tobacco is 18 in most of the country demonstrates this legislation will not achieve its stated purpose.



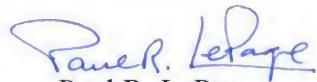
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LD 1170 will simply increase the black market for tobacco products and push our Maine citizens between the ages of 18 to 20 into acquiring tobacco products through alternative sources.

Finally, this bill will hurt our Maine convenience and grocery stores, which will lose sales of tobacco and other products to neighboring New Hampshire. Our Maine retailers had a compliance rate of 95.52% for sales of tobacco products—the second best compliance rate in the nation, according to the FDA's inspections involving sales to minors. Clearly, our retailers are doing an outstanding job enforcing the current law.

I cannot support legislation that creates a competitive disadvantage for our small business owners, particularly those near the New Hampshire border. Therefore, I return LD 1170 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,



Paul R. LePage
Governor